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SOVIET - CIA
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The Central Intelligence Agency tried today to heal any split with the Pentagon over conflicting assessments of the rate of Soviet arms spending.

CIA testimony released by a congressional subcommittee yesterday said the Soviet Union had cut its rate of increase in arms spending by about half, from four or five per cent annually before 1976 to about two per cent since then.

Testimony by Deputy CIA Director Robert Gates, quoted by the panel, appeared to conflict sharply with remarks by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who said three weeks ago that the Soviet spending rate had not declined.

But the CIA said in a statement today that the information released by the committee "presents a narrow view of Soviet military growth" and the intelligence agency wanted to emphasize the broader context of its testimony to the subcommittee last November.

Even in the midst of the Soviet decline in defense spending, the agency said today, the money Moscow was putting into arms was still 45 per cent larger than U.S. expenditures.

It added that while the margin had decreased, the Soviets still outspent the United States in certain key categories.

Sen. William Proxmire, who released the CIA testimony, described its conclusion on Soviet spending growth as "tentative."

But the Wisconsin Democrat said "it is time for Washington to take official notice that Soviet military procurement has been stagnant for the past seven years and stop acting like nothing has happened."

This view of the CIA's testimony was seen as a continuation of its long-running public dispute with the Pentagon over Soviet arms spending, with the military insisting on a higher figure.

President Reagan and Weinberger have based much of their argument for greatly increased U.S. arms spending on claims of a massive Soviet buildup.

The CIA gave these figures for new weapons in 1977-83, with which it said the Pentagon agreed:

Intercontinental ballistic missiles - Soviets 1,100, U.S. 135;
submarine-launched ballistic missiles - Soviets 700, U.S. 390; bombers - Soviets 300, U.S. none; fighter planes - Soviets 5,000, U.S. 3,000, and battle tanks - Soviets 15,000, U.S. 5,000.

The CIA said also Soviet efforts to develop advanced weapons systems continued into the 1980's at a pace at least as rapid as in the past 20 years, with the new arms ranging from cruise missiles to space systems and submarines.

It said that between 1974 and 1983, the Soviet Union spent a total of \$2.2 trillion on arms while the United States spent \$1.6 trillion, with the United States slowly closing the gap in spending in the past several years.